

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO

SUBJECT: NAC MINISTERIAL MEETING VENUES AND DATES

REF: USNATO 1367

1. WE HAVE NOTED WITH INTEREST AMBASSADOR HARTOGH'S PRESENTATION AT MARCH 11 PERMREP LUNCH CONCERNING SCHEDULING OF FUTURE SPRING NAC MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. IN THIS CONNECTION, WHEN HE WAS IN WASHINGTON RECENTLY, VAN EEKELEN, NETHERLANDS FOREIGN MINISTRY NATO DIRECTOR, CITED PROBLEMS THAT HAD ARISEN IN SCHEDULING SPRING 1975 GATHERING, AND SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF SITES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND DATES COULD BE FIXED EARLY IN ADVANCE. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS TOLD VAN EEKELEN THAT THEY WOULD PURSUE THIS PROPOSAL, PARTICULARLY IF DUTCH WERE TO RAISE THE MATTER IN PERMREP DISCUSSIONS.

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2. BASED ON HARTOGH'S INTERVENTION, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD

BE USEFUL IF AMBASSADOR BRUCE, AT EARLY PERMREP LUNCH, COULD SUPPORT AN EXAMINATION BY SYG LUNS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFIRMING AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE THE VENUES FOR FORTHCOMING SPRING MEETING. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THAT DOMESTIC AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS MAY REQUIRE A MEMBER TO FOREGO HOSTING A MEETING, NONETHELESS WE HAVE NOTED THAT THE ALPHABETICAL ROTATION SYSTEM WHICH WAS ADOPTED SOME YEARS AGO HAS BEEN LARGELY LOST THROUGH NUMEROUS

SUBSTITUTIONS. THUS, LUNS MIGHT PROJECT A FRESH SCHEDULE OF SPRING SESSIONS OVER, SAY, THE NEXT DECADE FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENTS.

3. ADDITIONALLY, WE BELIEVE IT MIGHT BE USEFUL ALSO TO CONSIDER FIXING REGULAR DATES FOR THE SPRING AND FALL MEETINGS. THESE DATES MIGHT BE, FOR THE SPRING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE FIRST THURSDAY AND FRIDAY IN JUNE, AND, SIMILARLY, FOR THE FALL, THE SECOND THURSDAY AND FRIDAY IN DECEMBER. FIXING THE DATES IN THIS FASHION WOULD HAVE THE SPECIFIC ADVANTAGE, AT A TIME OF RISING TRAVEL COSTS AND INCREASING PRESSURES ON MINISTERS' SCHEDULES, OF ALLOWING OTHER MINISTERIAL MEETINGS TO BE FITTED IN AROUND THE NATO GATHERINGS, USING THE NATO SESSIONS AS FIXED POINTS IN THE CALENDAR. FURTHER, WE HAVE NOTICED THAT MINISTERS OFTEN HAVE DIFFICULTY IN AGREEING UPON MINISTERIAL DATES AS A RESULT OF PLANS FOR BILATERAL VISITS. WITH THE NATO MEETING DATES CLEARLY ESTABLISHED, SUCH BILATERAL VISITS COULD BE SCHEDULED TO AVOID CONFLICT WITH THE NATO MEETINGS.

4. BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH ALLIED REPRESENTATIVES SINCE THE MATTER WAS RAISED BY VAN EEKELEN, WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT SUPPORT FOR THE FOREGOING COULD BE ELICITED FROM MOST ALLIES. HOWEVER, WE WOULD PREFER TO TEST THE WATER FIRST AMONG THE PERMREPS AND WITH LUNS BEFORE TAKING A FORMAL POSITION. WE WOULD ALSO WELCOME, OF COURSE, USNATO'S VIEWS.

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